581 It was not felt necessary to marry. Because of the strong
589 economic position of women, a few spinsters had their own homes, farmed their own lands, enlisting nephews and nieces to help, or hiring as needed, and entered fully into the social life of the area. Others lived with relatives and assisted in the maintenance of a larger household unit. Some men, too, never married.
[593] One group of grown siblings of both sexes stated they were "too happy together to marry."

836 Pre-marital chastity was more or less observed. If a girl became pregnant before marriage, her parents brought pressure,
848 usually successful, on the boy to marry her. The occasional illegitimate child was raised without stigma in the girl's family, though problems arose during pregnancy and delivery (cf. "cone of wood" below). The mother later found a husband. One father was angered because he felt his daughter's pregnancy wrecked her chances for a marriage of prestige. He was conspicuous for his social aspirations towards city ways.

864 Information on human sexual matters was gathered by the
• 831 young sometimes by accidental observation of parents and others, through hints from hearing cursing, and by conversations with grandparents, older siblings, and friends of the same sex. Men joked on sex matters at the all-male rice-uprooting parties. Being antithetic to the ascetic prescriptions of Buddhism, sex talk was highly charged. Sex was never discussed in mixed company.

Residence

592 The nuclear family of husband, wife, and unmarried children was the primary social and productive unit, but other resident
[591] kinship units larger and smaller also occurred. After marriage, the couple usually lived for a time in the house of the parents of one spouse or the other; then, as soon as they could afford it, set up housekeeping in their own house. Of a sample of 96 families in Bang Chan, 30 set up independent households at once after marriage, 16 after one year, and the rest, a few per year, on throughout 10 years; 15 of the families never had a house of their own but lived with other relatives (Janlekha:37). Of 298 families, 59.4 per cent lived independently as a nuclear family, while 34.9 per cent lived with other relatives in the house. (The remaining were single persons living alone, or priests at the temple in the "ecclesiastical family.") The average size of the households (not necessarily the nuclear families) was 5.7 persons, with a range of 1 to 14, the median
361 being 6 (ibid. 28-29). The house of a new couple was usually built adjacent to parents or relatives, and certainly within calling distance or sight of some other household. Social
621 patterns of cooperative work, borrowing, and visiting kept adjacent households, whether kin, co-religionists or not, in

759 the slight differences in ministrations. "The Muslim mid-
795 wife massages more than the Buddhist." The women easily
844 entered into reciprocal courtesies. The Muslim woman knew
57 the steps in the Buddhist winnowing ceremony and performed
[852] them as desired. One Buddhist mother dispensed, however, with the winnowing "because the midwife was Muslim." A Buddhist woman made up the khwan khao in the fashion specified by the Muslim midwife and participated in the latter's teacher-rite.

795 Certain fundamental ideas of the Muslims led to rein-
779 terpretations of familiar Buddhist terms and activities.
[774] "Khwan" referred to the soul, but with no implication of reincarnation. "Bun," meaning "merit" to the Buddhist,
[782] meant charitable giving in the sense of tithes, for Islam prescribed that a portion of one's income be given to the
[17] poor. On the other hand, the Muslims had taken over many Buddhist practices: for one, the acceptance of Buddhist holy water as a cure for spirit attack.

795 Completely Muslim was the stress on physical and
[783] moral purification as an objective of every rite, and
[304] conversely, the prevalence of the idea of defilement.
[764] "Circumcision is to cleanse the body before growing up," it was said. Muslim mortuary rites were elaborate pro-
[831] cedures for purification. When a Muslim baby died, the Buddhist midwife said, "The body was cleaned before burial," implying thorough measures beyond his ordinary
[834] experience. Procreation was viewed as dangerous and contaminating. The behavior that hid sexual phenomena at
[562] the same time by constant prescriptions kept sexuality much more in mind. Muslims separated males from females, for example, at feasts. No Muslim male ever became a midwife.

795 The events surrounding childbirth illustrated the
843 differing viewpoints between Muslim and Buddhist. In the
844 seventh month of her pregnancy, a Muslim woman called on her chosen midwife, and gave her a gift of betel pepper leaves and areca nut to assure her services (fāk thong: to deposit gold). On returning home, she went as
[273] fast as possible "to insure fast delivery." Since Muslims frowned on liquor, their medicines were made up of hot-tasting spices in hot water. Yet one Muslim mid-
795 wife prescribed large doses of liquor before and during
844 parturition. For labor and delivery, a Muslim was stricter about utilizing the privacy of the small enclos-
[562] ed room, if there were one, while in the Buddhist house-hold "it could be anywhere" in the house. Muslim men, except for husband, brother, or father, were excluded from the scene. The Muslim khwan khao contained "7

4:Phillips E-4,5 (1956-1957) 1966
AO7 Central Thai AO7
Bang Chan

538 231 ("Who knows what he was in earlier lives and what powers he brought with him into this one?"), there is enough reality about the tale to make people want to listen. Moreover, it is wish-fulfilling fantasy; people laugh because reality has been outraged, but with a lingering desire that it really could be.

522 538 The kinds of stories outlined above do not exhaust the villagers' stock of conversational humor. There are also tall stories without the supernatural touch, broad burlesques, "dirty" jokes,[12] and the countless epigrams that work their way into almost any conversation; the last are not so much topics of conversation as they are means of punctuating a point. However, enough has been said to indicate that in its cognitive stylization and social psychological purposes, Bang Chan humor is not too different from Western humor. It is rather the content, frequency, and evaluation of the humor that is so distinctive. That the content should be distinctive is of course self-evident, since all humor is rooted in the implicit and familiar premises of workaday, cultural life. In fact the very essence of a joke is seeing the culturally familiar in an entirely new light. This may help to explain, incidentally, why it is always so painfully self-defeating to try "to explain" the content of a joke: its entire effect is dependent on the listener's implicit

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522 831 538 081 [12] Sexual and scatological humor in Bang Chan pose some special problems. On the one hand, because villagers take such a matter-of-fact approach to sex, there are actually few jokes and stories that aim explicitly at being titillating or risqué. For most Bang Chaners, sex is something to be experienced and enjoyed in private, not snickered about barracks-style; there is no *sanug* in *talking* about sex (although there may be in playing with tabooed words, especially if cleverly done). Also, villagers seem to lack any interest in lewdness for its own sake. Not only Bang Chan, but Thai culture in general, is striking for its relative absence of attempts to edify sex: there is nothing in Thai literature or art, for example, approximating the exaggerated bawdiness of Rabelais or the graphic sensuality of the kind of sculpture found at Khajuraho and Konarak in India.

On the other hand, sexual situations are very often used as vehicles for portraying the foibles and stupidities of people. Villagers particularly enjoy stories of individuals of either sex who devise ways for seducing the unsuspecting, or of individuals who manage to outwit their spouses while philandering with their lovers; the more complex their machinations, the more amusing the stories. However, it is the social psychological, not the sexual, dimensions of these tales that form the major bases of their appeal.

Finally, it should be noted that villagers tend to distinguish between what could be called "genital" and "anal" modes of humor. The latter type has considerably fewer taboos associated with it. Thus, whereas most villagers would avoid going into descriptive detail in reporting the physical aspects of a tale of sexual conquest, they would have few qualms about discussing (and often with acoustical detail) such things as people who pass air in public or who otherwise get themselves into compromising anal situations. (Interestingly, J. Marvin Brown in his linguistic work with Thai informants, often including female university students, reports in a personal communication that he encountered difficulty in obtaining the various Thai terms for sexual organs and acts, but that the terms for anal and excretory behavior were given with little hesitation.)